

Rebuilding Valley Gardens Stage 1: Roads

Why are we changing the Road layout?

Despite being designed for vehicles, with no real thought for anyone else, Valley Gardens works poorly for everyone moving through the area.

When we surveyed residents in April 2013:

- only 34% of people felt the roads were well designed to keep traffic moving.
- only 26% felt that it was pleasant to walk in Valley Gardens.
- only 17% felt that it was easy to cross the road on foot.
- only 10% felt that it was pleasant to cycle in Valley Gardens.
- only 9% felt that cycle parking was of high quality.

The current road arrangement between the Aquarium Roundabout and St Peters Church is a needlessly confusing mixture of gyratories and contraflows, with buses, private vehicles and cyclists moving from one side of the gardens to the other as they travel north to south.

This creates an unpleasant and at times unsafe environment, which prevents people from enjoying public spaces as much as they could. In our 2013 consultation, 83% of people said they'd like to spend more time in the gardens if the facilities/environment were improved. In the 36 months between August 2008 and July 2011 185 collisions were reported in Valley Gardens. 32 were serious, 1 fatal. Of 249 casualties, 86 were vulnerable road users (32 cyclists and 54 pedestrians).

The collisions tend to cluster around particularly confusing and counter - intuitive junctions.

We have to simplify the road layout if we want to improve Valley Gardens for everyone. Ideally this has to be achieved without losing any of the important trees in the area.

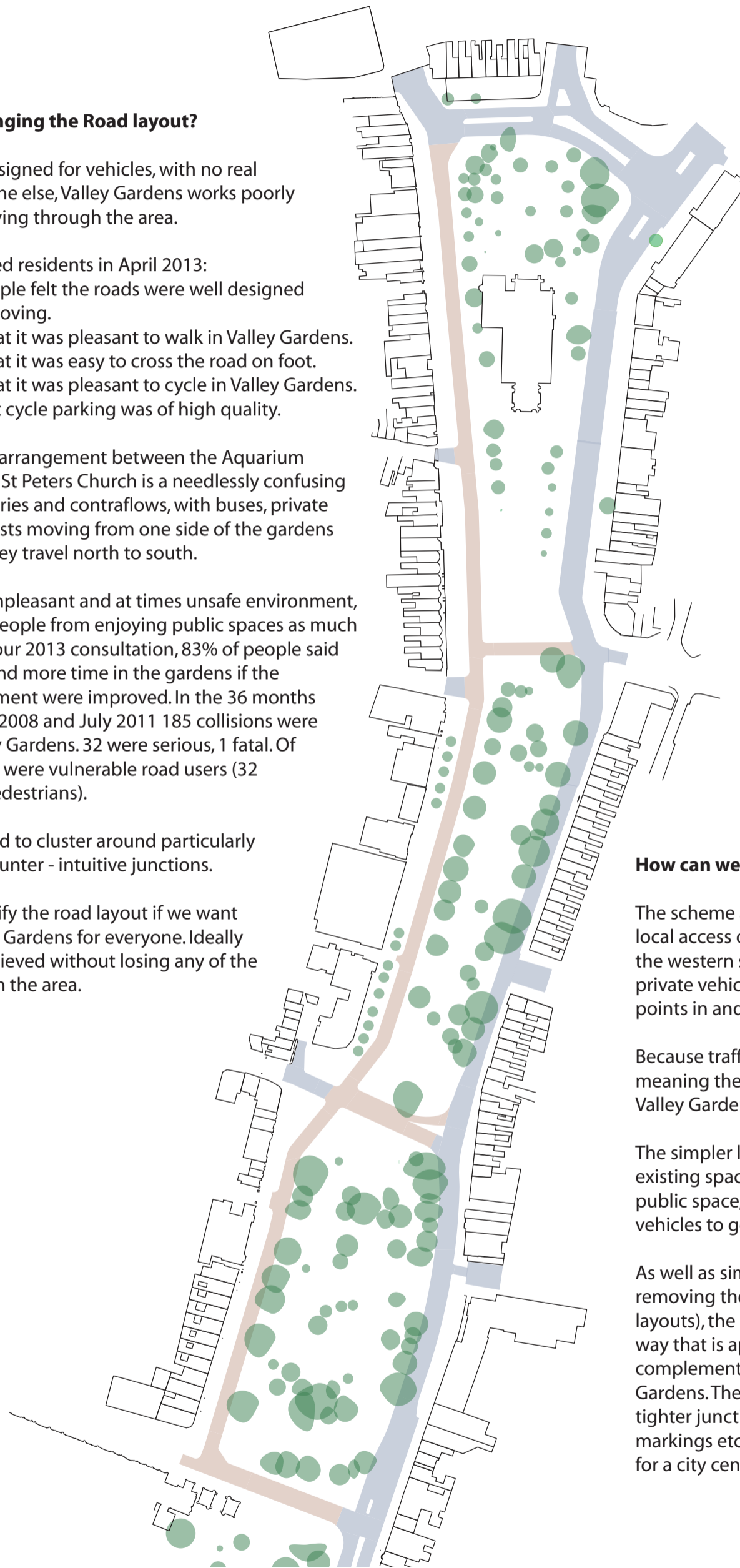
How can we simplify the road layout?

The scheme achieves this by moving buses, taxis and local access onto a consistent route that will run along the western side of Valley Gardens, and keeping private vehicles on the eastern side. (All vehicle access points in and out of Valley Gardens will be maintained).

Because traffic routes are simplified, so are junctions, meaning there are fewer delays when driving in Valley Gardens.

The simpler layout enables us to reclaim some of the existing space given over to vehicles to create more public space, without reducing the time it takes for vehicles to get through the area.

As well as simplifying the traffic infrastructure (and so removing the need for confusing junctions and road layouts), the proposal sees carriageways designed in a way that is appropriate for a city centre environment and complementary to the character and location of Valley Gardens. The design language, including elements such as tighter junction radii, narrow lane widths, minimal road markings etc., will encourage drivers to drive appropriately for a city centre location.



Key	
Bus, Taxi & Access	Red line
General Traffic	Grey line

Rebuilding Valley Gardens Stage 1: Roads (cont)



Existing

New

The current traffic layout is unnecessarily confusing. The mix of gyratories and contraflows require complex junctions and create a dangerous environment. The simplified layout puts general traffic on the eastern side of the Gardens and public transport / local access to the west. As well as making Valley Gardens easier to drive through and safer for everyone, this lets us reduce the amount of tarmac without reducing the time it takes to drive through the area. All routes in and out of Valley Gardens stay the same.

Rebuilding Valley Gardens Stage 2: Walking

Complex junctions and constantly changing traffic arrangements currently make it difficult (and sometimes dangerous) for pedestrians to cross the road in Valley Gardens.

Numerous collisions have taken place in the area. The vehicle dominated design of the area, which encourages drivers to drive without appropriate care, the counter intuitive road layout and limited number of formal crossing places are all contributory factors.

In future pedestrians will only need to cross two lanes of traffic at any point within the project area, and will always know which direction that traffic is coming from - increasing both access and safety.

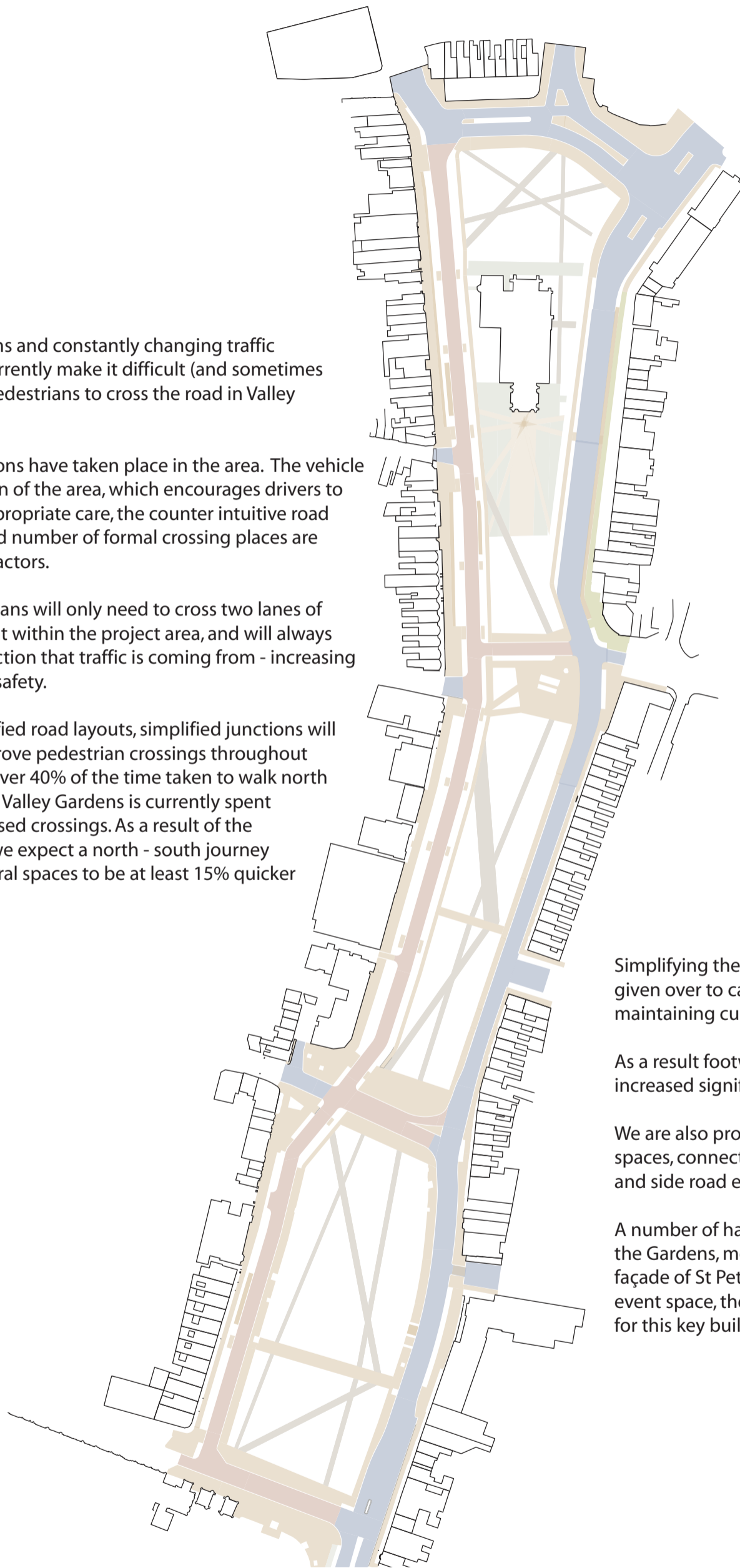
Alongside simplified road layouts, simplified junctions will enable us to improve pedestrian crossings throughout Valley Gardens. Over 40% of the time taken to walk north to south through Valley Gardens is currently spent waiting at signalised crossings. As a result of the improvements, we expect a north - south journey through the central spaces to be at least 15% quicker in future.

Simplifying the road layout also lets us reduce space given over to carriageway infrastructure whilst maintaining current access and journey times for vehicles.

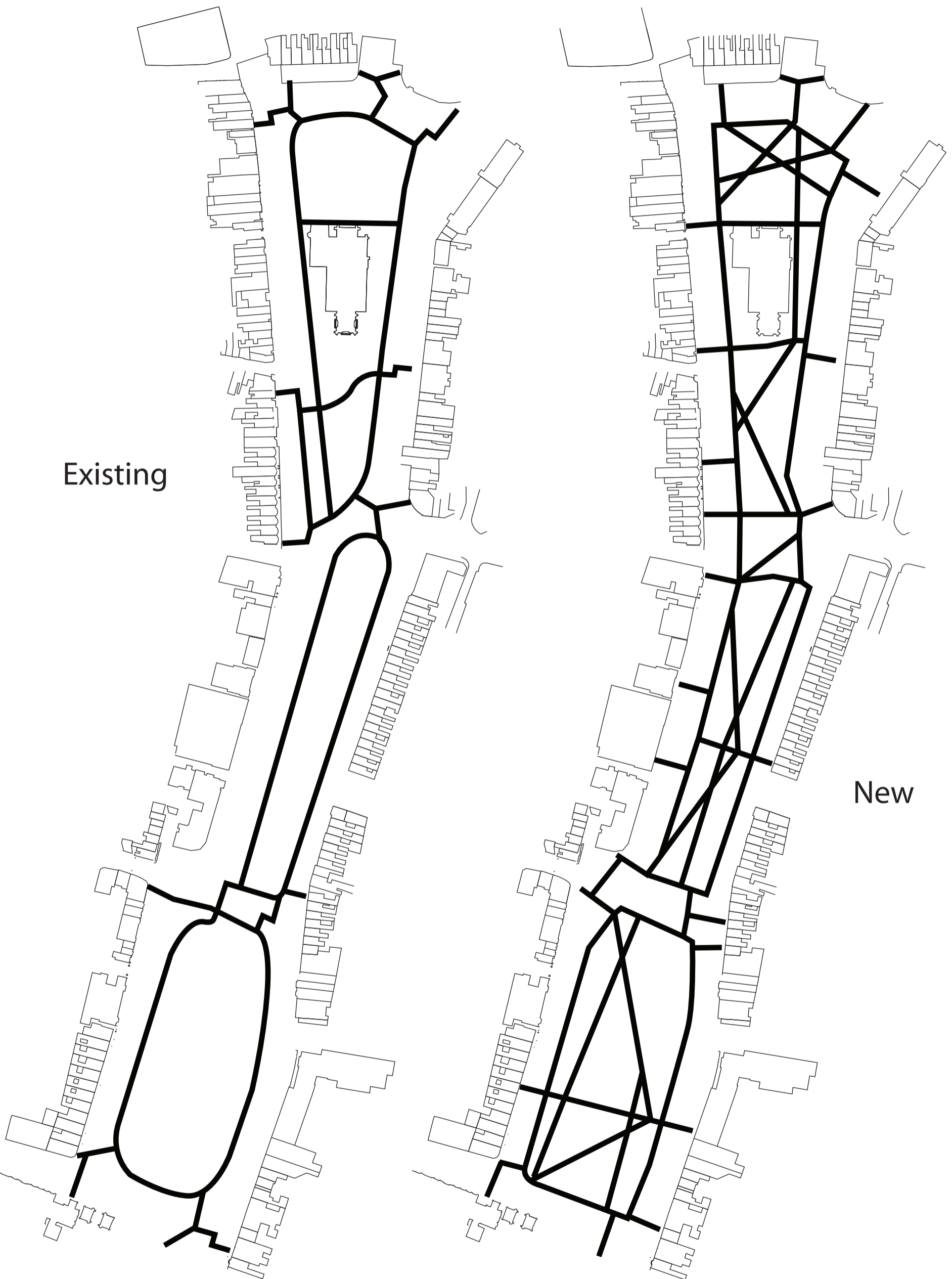
As a result footways along building lines can be increased significantly.

We are also providing new paths across the public spaces, connecting key destinations such as the University and side road entrances to Valley Gardens.

A number of hard-scaped spaces are provided within the Gardens, most notably a formal square at the southern façade of St Peters. As well as providing an occasional event space, the Square provides an enhanced setting for this key building.



Rebuilding Valley Gardens Stage 2: Walking (cont)



Simplifying the road layout offers opportunities to significantly increase pedestrian access to open spaces. Along with new footways within the green areas, this will also better connect the east and west of the city.

Rebuilding Valley Gardens Stage 3: Other Transport

Taxis

One of the issues flagged up during our initial scoping consultation was the lack of legibility of taxi provision in Valley Gardens. There is an established rank at St Peter's Place, and a smaller one at Pool Valley, but nothing much in between (the small rank outside the Astoria is currently barely used).

The St Peter's Place rank is well positioned to serve different areas of the city, but has limited capacity for waiting cab drivers. Having a cab rank on such a busy junction can also only add to congestion.

In future, we will relocate the St Peter's rank onto York Place. This provides the same access as the current St Peter's rank, but moves the actual rank away from the busy St Peter's Place junction and provides room for more taxis. We'll also be creating smaller additional ranks further south, and letting taxi drivers use some of the new loading bays in the evening.

Extending the number of taxi spaces in the area means more choice for customers whilst increasing the presence of taxi drivers will help make the area feel safer at night.

Buses and taxis will have access to a dedicated route along the western side of Valley Gardens.

Loading

Loading bays are provided at regular intervals on both sides of Valley Gardens. We expect that these will be time restricted, although the details of time restrictions are yet to be agreed.

Loading bay provision includes one or two half loading bays to allow vehicles to bump up onto the pavement (time restricted to stop this happening during inbound and outbound peaks) along Richmond Parade, along with bays at the entrances of Morley Street and Richmond Parade to serve premises at either end of this stretch.

Buses

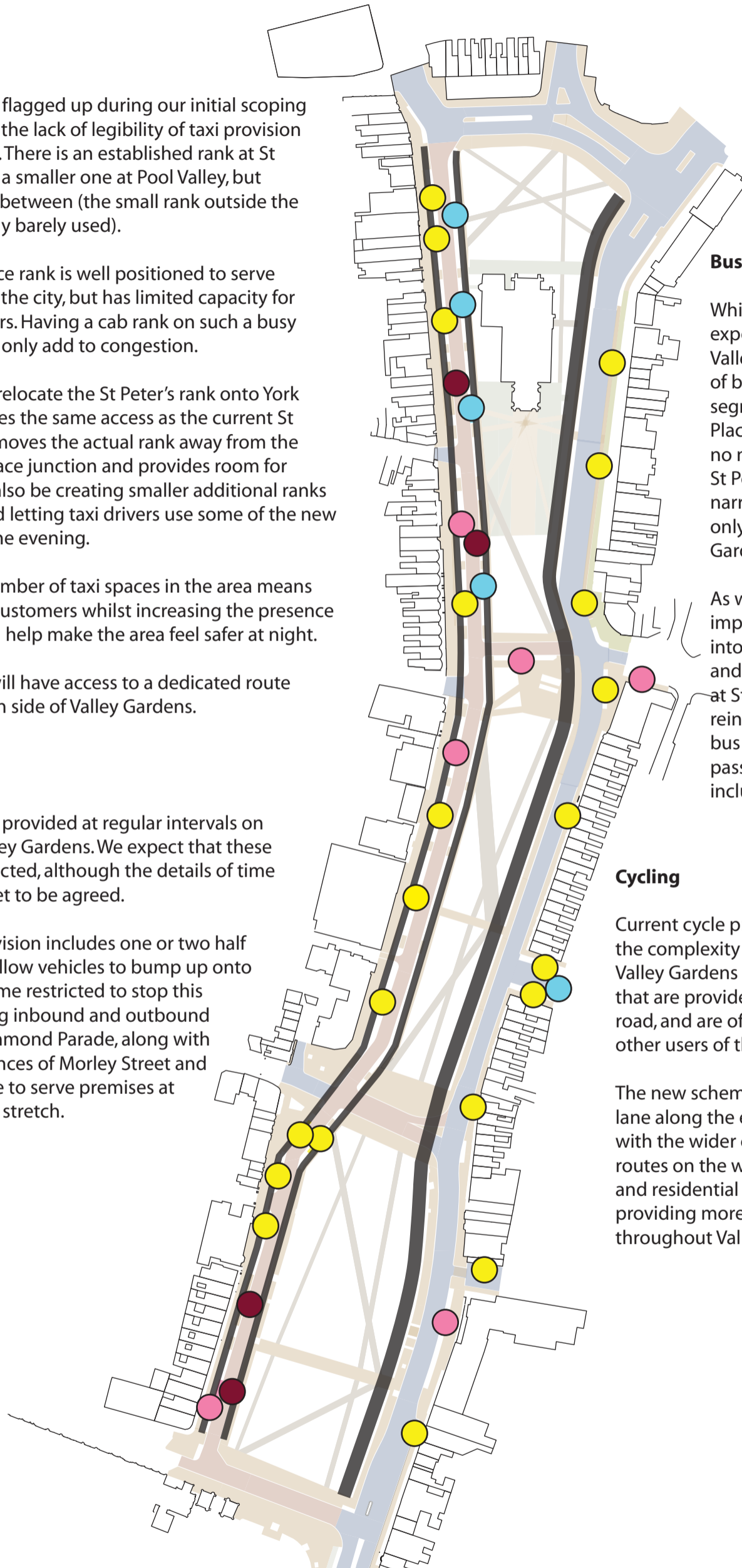
While current bus lanes result in relatively expedient and reliable journey times through Valley Gardens for bus passengers, the quality of bus stops is often poor. The unconventional segregated, two-way bus lanes at Gloucester Place enables provision of a southbound, but no northbound bus stop, while the northbound St Peter's stop delivers bus passengers onto a narrow traffic island. During consultation, only 19% of people felt bus stops in Valley Gardens were of high quality.

As well as maintaining southbound and improving northbound bus journey times by introducing a dedicated route for public transport and access, improved bus stops will be provided at St Peter's, while additional stops will be reinstated at Victoria Gardens. This will improve bus service legibility and accessibility for passengers and enhance connections to areas including the North Laine.

Cycling

Current cycle provision is constrained by, and so reflects the complexity of, the wider traffic network. Some areas of Valley Gardens have cycle provision, some don't. Facilities that are provided switch from east to west, from footway to road, and are of varying quality, encouraging conflict with other users of the space and discouraging cycling.

The new scheme includes a consistent, dedicated cycle lane along the eastern side of Valley Gardens that connects with the wider city cycle network, and two quieter cycle routes on the western side that provide access to businesses and residential areas such as North Laine. We'll also be providing more, and better quality cycle parking throughout Valley Gardens.



Key	
Cycle facility	—
Taxi Bay	● (blue)
Loading Bay	● (yellow)
Taxi / Loading Bays	● (pink)
Bus Stop	● (red)

Rebuilding Valley Gardens 4: Lawn & Meadow

In future Valley Gardens should not just be about traffic infrastructure. The area has huge potential as a public place that can benefit residents and visitors, as well as biodiversity.

When we surveyed residents in April 2013, 83% of people said they'd like to spend more time in the gardens if the facilities/environment were improved.

- 82% of people wanted more trees / landscaping / vegetation
- 73% wanted less traffic
- 71% wanted less vehicle noise
- 70% wanted easier pedestrian access to the Gardens
- 66% wanted a safer (from traffic) environment
- 58% wanted better air quality
- 56% wanted better or more seating

The area's landscaping scheme helps achieve these aspirations. Areas of hard-wearing lawn are enhanced with meadow planting strips along the eastern and western edges of the central areas. These strips provide colour and separation from the vehicle routes, and are formed of plants that can benefit biodiversity whilst minimising maintenance requirements.

Example plants for the meadow planting scheme include Musk Mallow, Bladder Campion, Quaking Grass and Hedge Woundwort.



Musk Mallow



Bladder Campion



Quaking Grass



Hedge Woundwort

Key

Lawn

Meadow



Rebuilding Valley Gardens 5: SUDs Planting & Water

Water features

Historically Valley Gardens was undeveloped due to a winterbourne (temporary winter) stream that ran through the area before terminating at Pool Valley.

The proposal reconnects to this historic aspect of the area's character by introducing a variety of water and related features.

The square outside St Peters will feature programmable fountains. A dechlorinated rill (small stream) follows paths through Victoria Gardens, bringing visual and biodiversity benefits. Similar benefits are achieved by a series of rain gardens and other SUD (Sustainable Urban Drainage) systems which also help protect the area from flash flooding events by storing water that the sewer system can't cope with during periods of heavy rainfall.

SUD features can be as simple as depressions in the ground level (rain gardens) or more formal structures along footways (such as street swales), planted with low maintenance plant species that can survive in wet or dry conditions. These may include Red Bistort, Goat's Beard and Garden Speedwell, shown opposite. The SUD features hold excess rainfall until it has time to soak into the ground.

We are also planning to provide drinking fountains.

One aspect likely to divide opinion is removal of the Mazda fountain. We feel this is justified given the space the feature takes up, its sporadic operation, relatively high maintenance costs and the fact it was never designed for Victoria Gardens (the fountain was designed for the 1924 British Exhibition at Wembley and was originally illuminated by multi-coloured bulbs). We will look for ways to re-use the fountain over coming months.



The Mazda fountain, as originally envisaged.

Thematic Gardens

An area of more formal 'thematic gardens' is planned along the east of St Peters. These gardens will be contained by low hedges and could be planted with low maintenance plants that benefit local biodiversity and /or looked after by local interest groups.



A street swale in Seattle



Goat's Beard



Red Bistort



Garden Speedwell



A Rain Garden feature in St Louis

Key

- Rill
- Fountain
- Thematic Gardens
- Rain Gardens & Swales

Rebuilding Valley Gardens 6: New Trees

Trees

Around 280 new trees are included in the new scheme to complement the existing Elms.

New trees are chosen to extend the city's Elm heritage, protect against disease, improve resilience to climate change, enhance biodiversity and enhance the character of Valley Gardens.

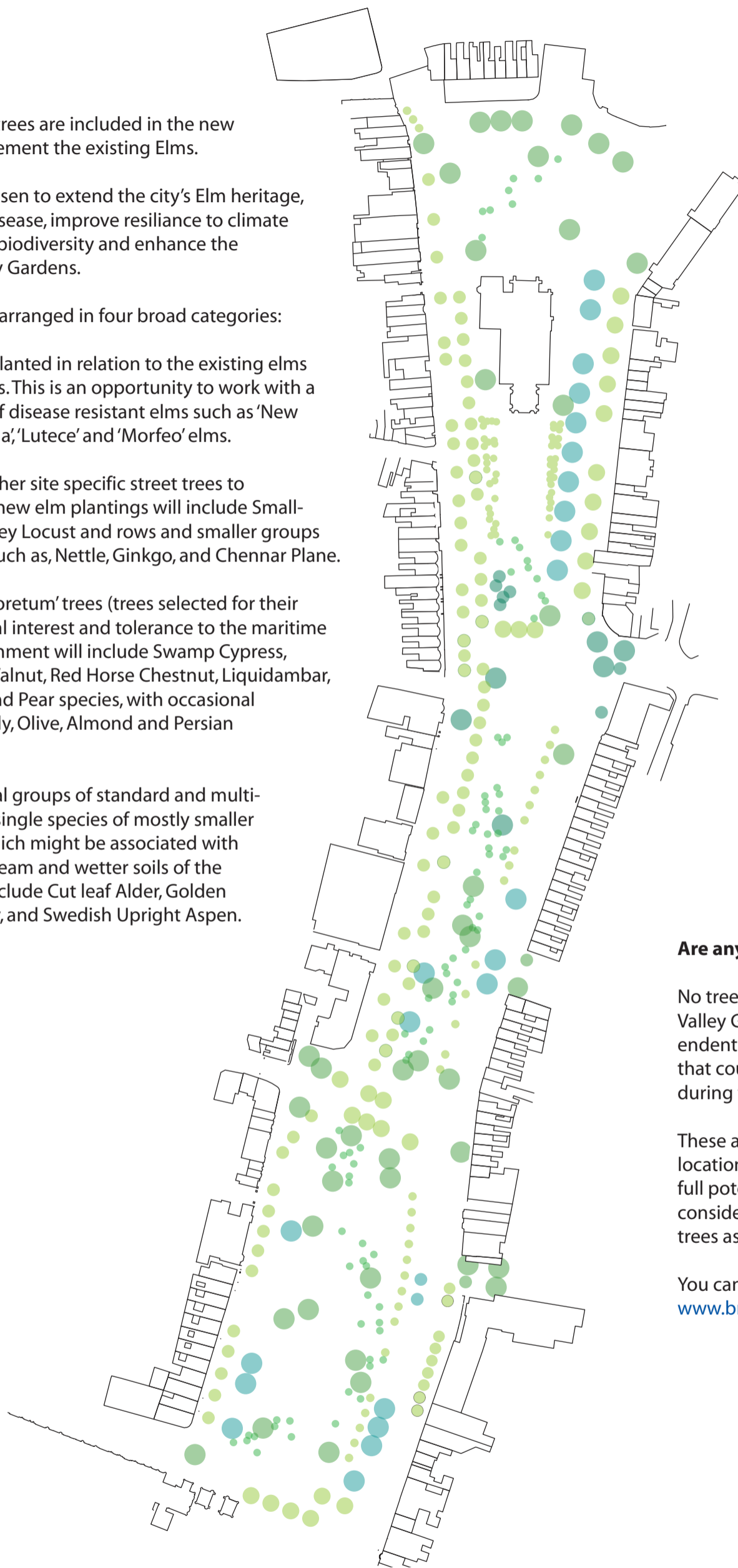
New trees can be arranged in four broad categories:

Elms: New elms planted in relation to the existing elms along street edges. This is an opportunity to work with a new generation of disease resistant elms such as 'New Horizon', 'Columella', 'Lutece' and 'Morfeo' elms.

Street Trees: Further site specific street trees to complement the new elm plantings will include Small-Leaved Lime, Honey Locust and rows and smaller groups of other species such as, Nettle, Ginkgo, and Chennar Plane.

Arboretum: 'Arboretum' trees (trees selected for their character, seasonal interest and tolerance to the maritime and urban environment will include Swamp Cypress, Magnolia, Black Walnut, Red Horse Chestnut, Liquidambar, Pin Oak, Cherry and Pear species, with occasional Austrian Pine, Holly, Olive, Almond and Persian Ironwood trees.

Pioneers: Informal groups of standard and multi-stemmed mixed/single species of mostly smaller 'pioneer' trees, which might be associated with the idea of the stream and wetter soils of the valley floor, will include Cut leaf Alder, Golden Grey Alder, Cherry, and Swedish Upright Aspen.



Key

- Pioneer Tree
- Arboretum Tree
- Elm Tree
- Street Trees

Are any trees being removed?

No trees need to be removed because of the Valley Gardens project. However, our independent tree survey identified a number of trees that could sensibly be removed or relocated during the course of the project.

These are generally trees that are planted in locations that inhibit their ability to reach their full potential or are diseased / dying. We may consider removing or relocating some of those trees as the project progresses.

You can see the tree survey and assessments at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/valleygardens

Rebuilding Valley Gardens 7: Events & Activity

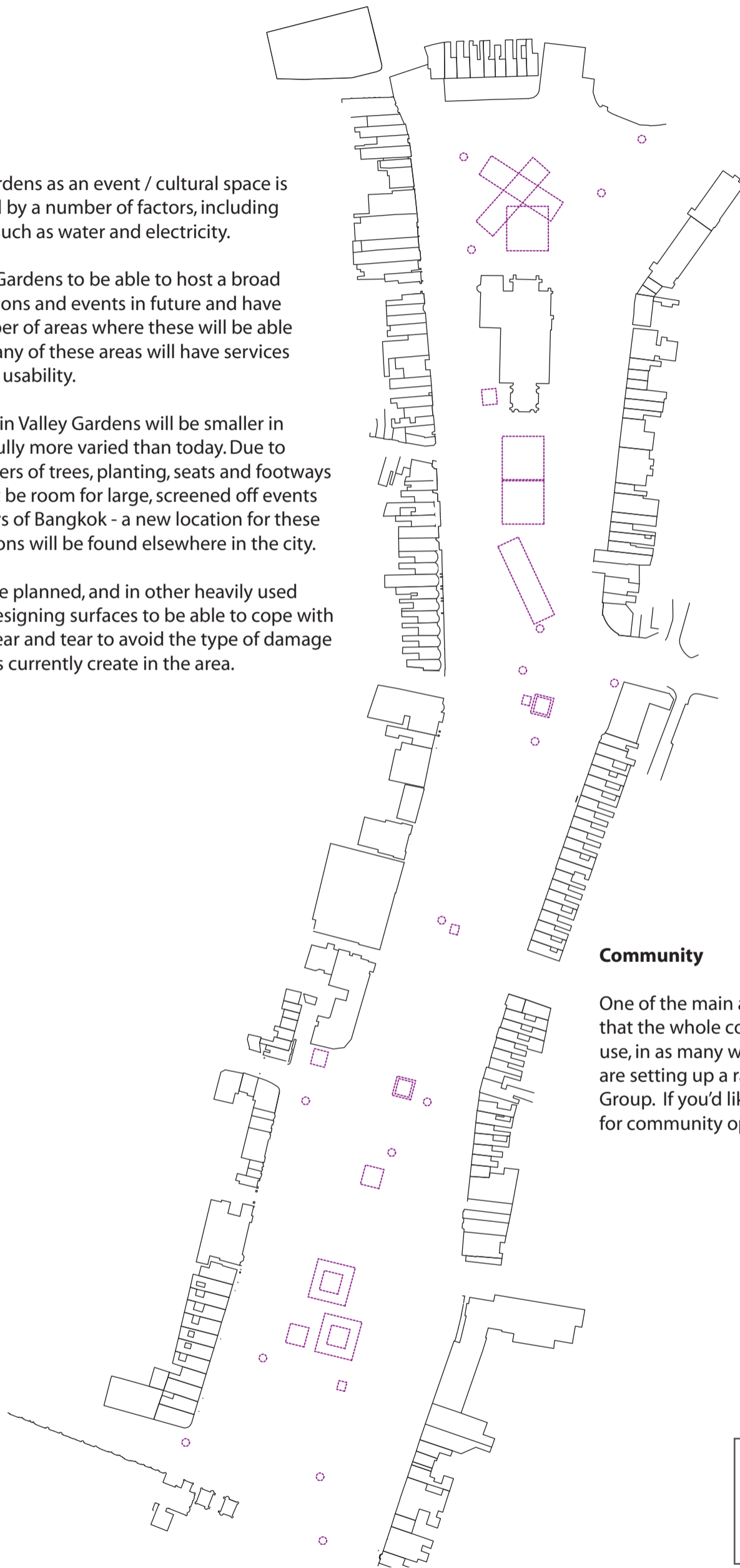
Events

Use of Valley Gardens as an event / cultural space is currently limited by a number of factors, including lack of services such as water and electricity.

We want Valley Gardens to be able to host a broad range of exhibitions and events in future and have planned a number of areas where these will be able to take place. Many of these areas will have services to increase their usability.

In future events in Valley Gardens will be smaller in scale, but hopefully more varied than today. Due to increased numbers of trees, planting, seats and footways (etc) there won't be room for large, screened off events like the Ladyboys of Bangkok - a new location for these types of attractions will be found elsewhere in the city.

Where events are planned, and in other heavily used areas, we'll be designing surfaces to be able to cope with high levels of wear and tear to avoid the type of damage that large events currently create in the area.



Community

One of the main aims of the project is to create a place that the whole community - in its broadest sense - can use, in as many ways as possible. To help achieve this we are setting up a range of networks including a Community Group. If you'd like to get involved, or have any ideas for community opportunities in Valley Gardens, let us know.

Key

Event Space 

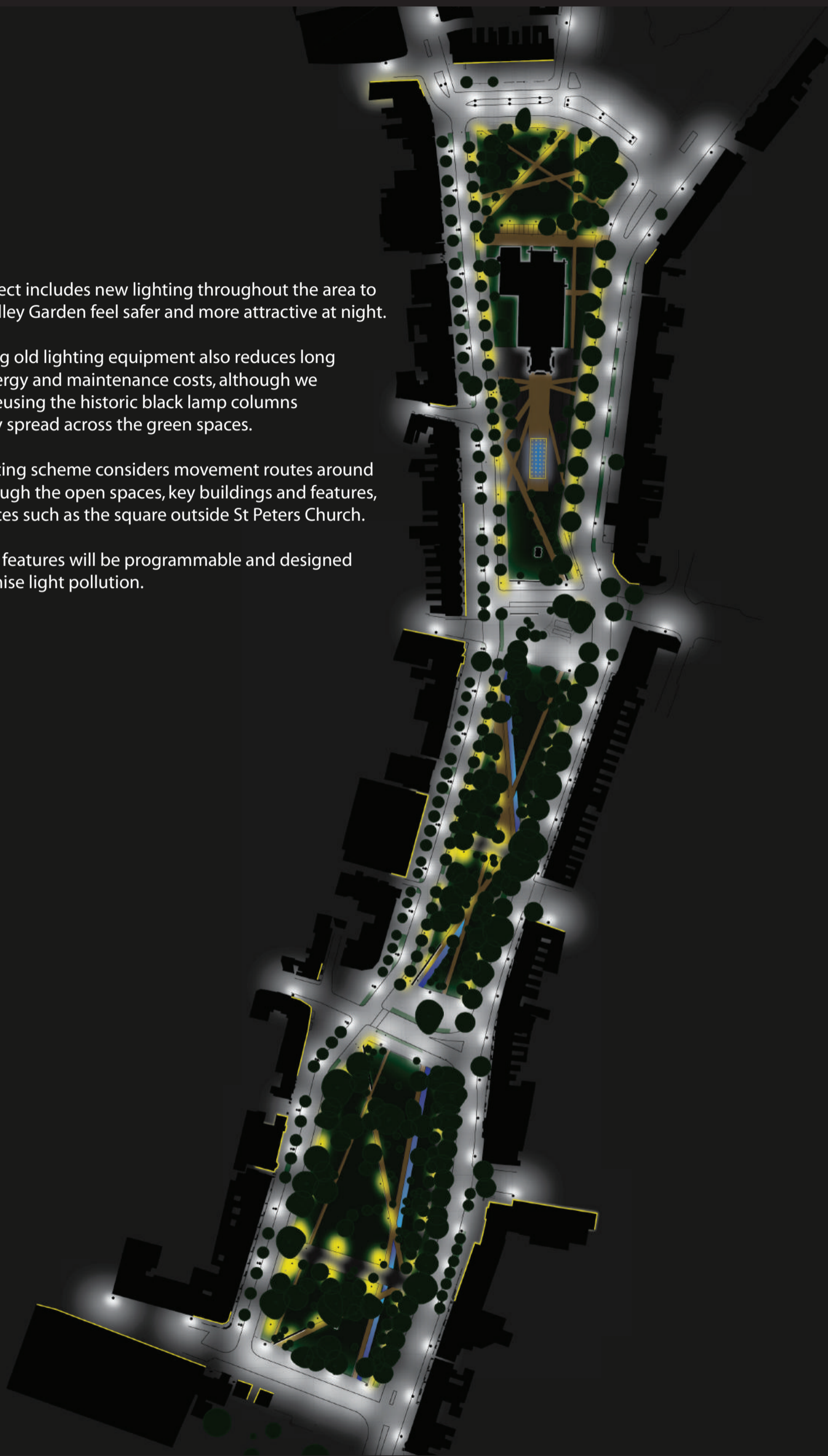
Rebuilding Valley Gardens 8: Lighting

The project includes new lighting throughout the area to make Valley Garden feel safer and more attractive at night.

Replacing old lighting equipment also reduces long term energy and maintenance costs, although we will be reusing the historic black lamp columns currently spread across the green spaces.

The lighting scheme considers movement routes around and through the open spaces, key buildings and features, and spaces such as the square outside St Peters Church.

Lighting features will be programmable and designed to minimise light pollution.



Rebuilding Valley Gardens 9: Final Layout



Rebuilding Valley Gardens 10: Cross Sections

St Peters Church



Victoria Gardens North



Victoria Gardens South



Valley Gardens: King & Queen View Comparison



Existing



New

A view across Victoria Gardens towards the King & Queen, showing new trees, footways and cycle way. Natural planting, including street swales and rain gardens, will help biodiversity and protect the area from flash flooding.

Valley Gardens: North Gate Comparison



Existing



New

The project creates better setting for key buildings such as St Peters and the Pavilion. This image shows how realigning the road and creating a raised carriageway area can better link the Gardens to the Pavilion's North Gate.

Valley Gardens: St George's Place Comparison



Existing



New

A tree lined bus and taxi lane runs along the western side of Valley Gardens, along with cycle lanes. Roads are designed to reduce the existing physical and visual barrier traffic infrastructure creates between the gardens and surrounding city.

Valley Gardens: St Peters South Comparison



Existing



New

A new public square is created outside St Peters to provide an enhanced setting for the building that can also be used for events. The existing St Peters parking area is reduced in size and relocated to the north of the building.

Valley Gardens: University View Comparison



Existing



New

Paths across the Gardens follow desire lines, such as the existing muddy track between Church Street and the University. Low walls double up as seats and around 280 new trees, including new Elms, create a more pleasant environment.